DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 300 302 SO 019 401

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TITLE Culture and Commerce: The Reinvention of Competition.
INSTITUTION Quebec Dept. of Communications, Quebec.
PUB DATE 14 May 88
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the meeting of the American Forum on Education and International Competence (St. Louis, MO, May 14, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Competition; *Culture Conflict; Economics; English; Foreign Countries; Mass Media; *Mass Media Effects; *Popular Culture

ABSTRACT

This paper presented by the Quebec (Canada) Minister of Communications contends that until the 1900s the cultural essence of a particular western country was found in its folk-tales, folk-songs, and the daily activities of ordinary people. The growth of the electronic and mass media has industrialized popular culture, and large-scale passive consumption of the electronic media has displaced community-based religious ceremonies, amateur performances, and music halls as the heart of common cultural experiences. Technological advances have steadily improved the quality and accessibility of movies, music, and other cultural industries over the years and have promoted English as a universal language. While people in other cultures prefer domestically-produced programs, U.S. industries are able to export films and television series at costs lower than other countries can produce domestic products. Consequently, U.S. culture is being forced on other cultures. The secularism and materialism of North American culture, however powerfully reinforced by mass media, are emphatically not the foundations of an emerging global culture by which other societies should be measured. (JHP)

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Le ministre des Communications

CULTURE AND COMMERCE: THE REINVENTION OF COMPETITION

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We Americans have one overwhelmingly bad habit in our foreign relations. We think that every country is a potential America.
- George F. Will

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ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI
MAY 14, 1988

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I COME FROM A COUNTRY THAT IS THE UNITED STATES' MOST IMPORTANT TRADING PARTNER, IF IN SUCH MATTERS VOLUME MEANS IMPORTANCE. MY COUNTRY IS ALSO THE UNITED STATES' CLOSEST GEOGRAPHICAL, AND PROBABLY POLITICAL, ALLY. INDEED, CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES ARE IN THE PROCESS OF CONCLUDING A TRADE LIBERALIZATION AGREEMENT WHICH WILL PROBABLY BRING THE TWO COUNTRIES EVEN CLOSER TOGETHER. FURTHERMORE, MORE THAN 21% OF INDUSTRIAL ASSETS IN CANADA (FINANCIAL INSITUTIONS EXCLUDED) ARE FOREIGN-OWNED, MOST OF THEM BY AMERICANS.

I ALSO COME FROM A SOCIETY, QUEBEC, WHICH HAS A LANGUAGE AND CULTURE VERY DISTINCT FROM THE REST OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT. WE HAVE HAD SOME CONSIDERABLE PRACTICE IN THE BALANCING OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL EXIGENCIES, THOUGH ADMITTEDLY NOT FROM PRECISELY THE SAME PERSPECTIVE WHICH ANIMATES THIS CONFERENCE.

AT ANY RATE, IT IS FROM THIS PARTICULAR SET OF QUALIFICATIONS THAT I VENTURE TO OFFER A FEW COMMENTS ON YOUR SUBJECT. PLEASE CONSIDER THEM AS COMING FROM A FRIEND, A FRIEND WHO IS FRANK, WHO IS A REALIST, AND WHO IS ABOUT AS CLOSE TO THE UNITED STATES AS AN OUTSIDER CAN BE.

THE BACKGROUND

I DON'T WANT TO REPEAT WHAT I SUSPECT YOU HAVE ALREADY HEARD. THE UNITED STATES IS ENGAGED IN A BATTLE TO PRESERVE ITS ERODING ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE. IT HAS THE LARGEST NET FOREIGN DEBT IN THE WORLD, A NEGATIVE TRADE BALANCE, A NEGATIVE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL PAYMENTS BALANCE, AND A DEPRECIATING CURRENCY.

THIS BATTLE IS TAKING PLACE IN A GLOBAL ECONOMIC THEATRE THE COMMANDING HEIGHTS OF WHICH HAVE BEEN SLIPPING OUT OF AMERICAN CONTROL.

THE TRADITIONAL AMERICAN CONCEPTION OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE OFFERED US A VIEW OF THE WORLD WHERE MARKET SHARE DEPENDED ON COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE, WHERE COMPETITION TURNED ON PRODUCT, PRICE AND DELIVERY. THAT WAS A PERFECTLY ADEQUATE VIEW FOR A DOMINANT POWER WHICH WAS ABLE TO USE ITS ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND OCCASIONALLY MILITARY MIGHT TO INFLUENCE TERMS OF TRADE IN ITS FAVOUR.

ALAS, THE WORLD HAS CHANGED. MANY OF YOU FEEL THAT IN AN UNSTABLE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, RENEWED ATTENTION TO TECHNOLOGY AND PRODUCTIVITY IS NECESSARY BUT NOT SUFFICIENT FOR THE U.S. TO REGAIN ITS ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE. YOU FEEL THAT AMERICANS MUST ALSO BECOME MORE FAMILIAR WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, OTHER CULTURES, AND OTHER LANGUAGES, IF THEY ARE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS. IN SOME SENSE YOU ARE SEEKING THE REINVENTION OF THE IDEA OF COMPETITION, ADDING CULTURAL TO THE TRADITIONAL COMMERCIAL VARIABLES.

SO FAR, SO GOOD. WITH THE PROBLEM-SOLVING ENTHUSIASM THAT IS SURELY ONE OF THE TRAITS OF YOUR CULTURE, YOU ARE DISCUSSING HOW THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM CAN BE MADE TO CONTRIBUTE TO "INTERNATIONAL COMPETENCE". IN MY COMMENTS TODAY, I WOULD LIKE TO TRACE A PART OF YOUR PROBLEM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A LARGE VIEW OF YOUR SUBJECT, OR AT LEAST A VIEW THAT WOULD ADMIT TELEVISION, THE CINEMA AND POPULAR MUSIC. I WOULD THEN LIKE TO CONSIDER A PECULIARLY AMERICAN NOTION OF "CULTURE" AND ITS PUTATIVE ROLE IN THE RESTORATION OF AMERICAN COMPETITIVENESS.

MY BASIC THESIS IS THAT THERE LIES AT THE HEART OF YOUR ENTREPRISE A VAST PARADOX, AND ONE THAT IS NOT LIKELY TO SIMPLIFY YOUR TASK. I WOULD OBSERVE THAT AT THE VERY MOMENT THAT THE INTERNATIONAL STRENGTH OF AMERICAN BUSINESS IS CAUSING WIDESPREAD CONCERN, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE HAVE NEVER BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL IN WORLD MARKETS.

AT A MOMENT WHEN THERE ARE CALLS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING AND INCREASED SENSITIVITY TO, AND KNOWLEDGE OF, OTHER CULTURES, THIS IS AT LEAST INCONVENIENT.

BUT OF WHAT, PRECISELY, DOES THE INCONVENIENCE CONSIST? OF WHAT PRECISE NOTION OF CULTURE ARE WE SPEAKING WHEN WE SEEK TO REINVENT COMPETITION?

THE AMERICAN CULTURAL PARISH

THE SPIRITUAL JURISDICTION OF THE HIGH PRIESTS OF AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE IS VAST AND REMARKABLY HOMOGENEOUS. THINGS WEREN'T ALWAYS THIS WAY.

UNTIL LESS THAN A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, IF ONE SOUGHT THE CULTURAL ESSENCE OF A PARTICULAR WESTERN SOCIETY, WHAT WAS TRULY UNIQUE AND INDIGENOUS TO IT, ONE LOOKED AT ITS POPULAR TRADITIONS, ITS FOLK-TALES AND FOLK-SONGS. ONE LOOKED AT ORDINARY PEOPLE IN THE CROWDED WORKING CLASS SECTIONS OF THE BIG CITIES, OR MORE OFTEN, IN THE VILLAGES AND HAMLETS DOTTED ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND HOW THEY REPRESENTED THEMSELVES AND AMUSED ONE ANOTHER. ONE LOOKED AT WHAT THEY SAID OR SANG ABOUT THEIR LIVES, THEIR FAITH, THEIR WORK, THEIR LEISURE, THEIR REGION, THEIR RACE, OR THEIR NATION. ONE LOOKED AT WHAT THEY MADE WITH THEIR HANDS AND AT HOW THEY DECORATED THEIR HOMES OR PLACES OF WORSHIP.

THESE HETEROGENEOUS FORMS OF POPULAR CULTURE HAVE NOW BECOME FOLKLORE, AND UNDERSTANDING OR PRESERVING THEM, PROFESSIONAL SPECIALTIES.

THE GROWTH OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA HAS INDUSTRIALIZED AND HOMOGENIZED POPULAR CULTURE, AND HAS COMPLETED ITS ISOLATION IN LEISURE TIME. THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA HAVE THREE CHARACTERISTICS WHICH HELP TO EXPLAIN THEIR IMPACT:

(I) THEY ARE FAR MORE ACCESSIBLE, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND INTELLECTUALLY, THAN PRINTED MATERIAL OR THE VISUAL ARTS. THEY REQUIRE LESS EFFORT, LESS LITERACY, LESS EDUCATION;

(II) CINEMA AND TELEVISION, AND THROUGH THEM, THE RECORDING INDUSTRY, BENEFIT FROM AN INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION WHICH EXPLOITS IMPORTANT BARRIERS TO ENTRY AND ECONOMIES OF SCALE AND SCOPE;

(III) TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE THEIR CAPACITY TO PENETRATE MARKETS.

ACCESSIBILITY - LARGE SCALE PASSIVE CONSUMPTION OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA HAS DISPLACED COMMUNITY-SCALE RELIGIOUS CEREMONY, AMATEUR PERFORMANCE AND MUSIC HALLS AS THE TOUCHSTONES OF COMMON CULTURAL EXPERIENCE.

INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION - THE EMERGENCE OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA TURNED THE CREATIVE PROCESS INTO A FORM OF PRODUCTION AND GAVE BIRTH TO THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES. UNLIKE THE OPERA OR THE BALLET, THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES COULD BENEFIT FROM EXPONENTIALLY GREATER ECONOMIES OF SCALE AND SCOPE BECAUSE THE SAME CULTURAL PRODUCT - A FILM, A TELEVISION SHOW, A RECORD - COULD BE CONSUMED AGAIN AND AGAIN AT A VERY LOW MARGINAL COST. UNLIKE A BOOK OR A PAINTING ON THE OTHER HAND, INITIAL DOMESTIC MARKET SIZE PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION, BECAUSE THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES REQUIRE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY FOR FRONT-END FINANCING.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT - WITH EACH TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE, THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA HAVE IMPROVED THE QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF THE PRODUCTS OF THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES. TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE ALSO REDUCED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NATIONAL JURISDICTION AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY. THE LOGIC OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND THEIR TECHNOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS IS THE LOGIC OF WORLD MARKETS, WITHOUT REGARD TO NATIONAL BOUNDARIES. THERE ARE NO BORDER CHECK-POINTS NOR CUSTOMS DUTIES FOR HERTZIAN WAVES.

A PRIMARY BENEFICIARY OF THESE FEATURES OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA HAS BEEN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. ENGLISH WAS IN ANY EVENT THE LANGUAGE CONTINUOUSLY SPOKEN BY ONE OR ANOTHER WORLD POWER OVER AT LEAST THE LAST TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS. GIVEN THAT THE EMERGING ECONOMIC POWERS EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN IDEOGRAPHIC LANGUAGES, WHICH TEND TO TRAVEL POORLY IF AT ALL, ENGLISH IS LIKELY TO REMAIN THE WORLD LANGUAGE FOR SOME TIME TO COME.

ALL THIS HAS MEANT THAT WHEN THE OCCASIONALLY CURIOUS AMERICAN GAZES UPON THE REST OF THE WORLD, HE IS LIABLE TO BE GRATIFIED BY THE SIGHT OF "FOREIGNERS" WATCHING DALLAS, MOBBING BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, LINING UP TO SEE MERYL STREEP MANY TIMES LARGER THAN LIFE, AND NOT INFREQUENTLY, SPEAKING ENGLISH.

FROM THAT COMFORTABLE PERSPECTIVE, SURRENDER TO CERTAIN PREMISES ALWAYS LATENT IN THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION IS ALTOGETHER TOO EASY. OTHER COUNTRIES, GEOGRAPHICAL ENTITIES CONVENIENTLY DISTANT, DO OF COURSE EXIST. IN MANY OF THEM, THE VERNACULAR IS NOT - OR NOT YET? - ENGLISH. OTHER CULTURES ARE, ON THIS ACCOUNT, ESSENTIALLY VESTIGIAL ANACHRONISMS DESTINED FOR A MORE OR LESS RAPID DECLINE.

I CALL AS MY WITNESS GEORGE LUCAS, A MAN WHOSE TALENT, NOT TO MENTION HIS BOX OFFICE, COMPELS RESPECT. LUCAS ACHIEVED SOMEWHAT OF A CLASSIC IN THE EXPRESSION OF THIS LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE, IN THE APPROPRIATE VENUE OF THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF ROLLING STONE:

IT IS ONE PLANET... EVERYTHING WILL MERGE INTO ONE CULTURE. THERE WILL BE ONE LANGUAGE EVERYONE WILL SPEAK... THE OPPOSING VIEW IS THE NOSTALGIC NOTION, [A] FEAR OF CHANGE: "I DON'T WANT TO LOSE MYSELF IN THE GREATER OCEAN OF HUMANITY". KICK AND SCREAM ALL YOU WANT, BUT THIS IS THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING. REGIONALISM IS GOING TO DISAPPEAR, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, PROBABLY FOR BETTER AND WORSE. YOU CAN PRESERVE LITTLE BITS OF CULTURE HERE AND THERE, BUT THE NEW CULTURE WILL BE GLOBAL.

ACCORDING TO LUCAS THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT IT: "THAT'S NOT SOMETHING TO ARGUE WITH. IT IS THE WAY IT IS".

SO THERE IS INDEED A CERTAIN COMPLACENCY IN THE AMERICAN CULTURAL PARISH, A COMPLACENCY BASED NOT ONLY ON FAITH, BUT ALSO ON EVIDENCE. NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE IN THE PURSUIT OF A NOTION OF CULTURE AND ITS DYNAMICS USEFUL TO THE ENTREPRISE OF RESTORING INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS OF AMERICAN INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE. FOR OUR PURSUIT, LUCAS' PERSPECTIVE IS A SNARE AND A DELUSION. AMONG OTHER THINGS, ONE MIGHT USEFULLY LOOK NOT ONLY AT WHAT IS ON THE TELEVISION, BUT ALSO AT WHO MADE IT.

CULTURE, COMMERCE, COMPETITION

THE ANTICIPATED HEGEMONY OF A GLOBAL POPULAR CULTURE IN ENGLISH, HOWEVER SUPERFICIALLY PLAUSIBLE, BECOMES LESS COMPELLING UPON CLOSE EXAMINATION. CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE ECONOMICS OF THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES DOES A GOOD DEAL TO DEMYSTIFY THE OMNIPRESENCE OF AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE, BY REVEALING IT TO BE THE PRODUCT OF READILY UNDERSTANDABLE MARKET FORCES.

THE KEY IS TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF DOMESTIC MARKET SIZE TO THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES. A FILM OR A TELEVISION SERIES PRODUCED FOR A POTENTIAL MARKET OF 200 MILLION PEOPLE WILL BE FINANCED IN A RADICALLY DIFFERENT WAY THAN A FILM OR TELEVISION SERIES PRODUCED FOR A MARKET OF 20 MILLION PEOPLE. THE DIFFERENCE WILL BE SO IMPORTANT TO THE NATURE OF THE FINAL PRODUCTS THAT THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS IN THE FILM OR TELEVISION INDUSTRIES CANNOT BE ASSIMILATED TO THE COMPETITION WHICH MAY BE SAID TO OCCUR AMONG BOOKS OR BALLET PERFORMANCES. ON THE OTHER HAND, ONCE THE FILM OR TELEVISION SERIES HAS BEEN PRODUCED AND COSTS AMORTIZED ON A LARGE DOMESTIC MARKET, THE EXPORT OF ADDITIONAL PRINTS TO SMALLER OVERSEAS MARKETS CAN BE UNDERTAKEN AT PRICES WHICH BEAR NO RELATION TO ORIGINAL PRODUCTION AND PROMOTION COSTS.

IF I MAKE A SEASON OF DALLAS AND RECOVER NEARLY ALL OF MY COSTS THROUGH U.S. SALES DURING THAT SAME SEASON, MY PRICES FOR RERUNS AND RESALE AROUND THE WORLD CAN BE RELATIVELY LOW. THESE PRICES WILL BE MUCH LOWER THAN IT WOULD COST A FOREIGN PRODUCER TO MAKE A SERIES TO COMPETE WITH DALLAS ON HIS NATIONAL TELEVISION. THE U.S. PRODUCER CAN AFFORD TO UNDERCUT FOREIGN PRODUCERS IN THEIR OWN SMALLER DOMESTIC MARKETS ALL OVER THE WORLD.

THIS DOES NOT CONSTITUTE UNFAIR PRACTICE IN THE INTERNATIONAL TRADING SYSTEM, SINCE WE LACK A GENERALLY ACCEPTED PRICING THEORY FOR THIS KIND OF CULTURAL GOOD, WITHOUT WHICH THEORY THERE CAN BE NO VERDICT OF DUMPING. IT DOES, HOWEVER, SHOW WHY THE INTERNATIONAL PENETRATION OF AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE HAS AS MUCH TO DO WITH ECONOMICS AS WITH INHERENT APPEAL.

IT WILL ALMOST ALWAYS BE RATIONAL FOR THE DOMESTIC BROADCASTER, IF HE IS UNFETTERED BY REGULATION AND UNAIDED BY SUBSIDY, TO PURCHASE AMERICAN TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS. AMERICAN SERIES ARE AVAILABLE IN SECONDARY MARKETS FOR A DERISORY FRACTION OF THEIR PRODUCTION COST. THE DOMESTIC PRODUCER, ON THE OTHER HAND, MUST RECOVER AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE OF HIS COSTS IN WHAT IS FOR HIM HIS PRIMARY MARKET, INEVITABLY CONSIDERABLY SMALLER AND LESS LUCRATIVE THAN THE U.S. MARKET. SO AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE ABROAD IS THE SIGN OF SOMETHING MORE THAN JUST "POPULARITY".

THERE IS A SECOND POINT TO BE MADE HERE, HOWEVER. IT IS THAT IN TELEVISION MARKETS IN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WHICH ARE THE PRINCIPAL U.S. COMPETITORS, AUDIENCES WILL DISPLAY A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR DOMESTICALLY PRODUCED PROGRAMMING, WHERE MARKET SIZE, SUBSIDY, OR REGULATION PERMIT ITS AVAILABILITY. I AM NOT SAYING THAT TALKING HEADS CAN ATTRACT A GREATER AUDIENCE SHARE THAN DALLAS DUBBED IN THE VERNACULAR. I AM SAYING THAT A DOMESTIC SERIES CAN AND DOES ATTRACT A GREATER AUDIENCE SHARE THAN DALLAS DUBBED IN THE VERNACULAR, EVEN THOUGH DALLAS PROBABLY COST TEN TIMES AS MUCH AS THE LOCAL ALTERNATIVE TO PRODUCE.

NOW THIS IS A FACT WHICH OUGHT TO GIVE GEORGE LUCAS, AND US, FOOD FOR THOUGHT. THERE IS NOTHING INEVITABLE, IN THE STRICT SENSE OF CULTURAL PREFERENCE, ABOUT THE OMNIPRESENCE OF AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE. AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE WILL ALWAYS BE POPULAR ELSEWHERE THAN IN AMERICA, BUT THERE IS NO REASON OF DEMONSTRATED CONSUMER PREFERENCE TO SUPPOSE THAT IT OR ANY EMERGENT GLOBAL CULTURE WILL CONSUME REGIONAL CULTURES. GIVEN THE ALTERNATIVE, PEOPLE WANT TO SEE THE WORK OF THEIR OWN CREATIVE ARTISTS.

AT THE HEART OF CULTURAL COMPLACENCY IN AMERICA, AT THE HEART OF THE DISMISSAL OF OTHER CULTURES AND OF THE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE DECLINE OF OTHER LANGUAGES, LIES A BADLY TRUNCATED NOTION OF WHAT "CULTURE" MEANS. ACCORDING TO THIS NOTION, IF "CULTURE" IS NOT OPERA OR BALLET OR SOME FORM OF ELITE CULTURE PURSUING GENUINELY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IN A GENUINELY INTERNATIONAL IDIOM, THEN IT MUST BE SPEILBERG, THIRTYSOMETHING, OR MADONNA.

THIS TRUNCATED NOTION OF CULTURE, AND NOT SOME INHERENT CHAUVINISM OR INEVITABLE PAROCHIALISM, IS THE CHALLENGE FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO REINVENT COMPETITION BY CONCEIVING IT AS IN PART A FUNCTION OF CULTURE. AT SOME MATERIAL LEVEL, THERE IS OF COURSE A KERNEL OF TRUTH IN THE IDEA THAT ALL THE WORLD WOULD LIKE TO LIVE LIKE THE AMERICAN UPPER MIDDLE CLASS. FAR MORE DEBILITATING FOR PRESENT PURPOSES, HOWEVER, IS THE INCAPACITY TO IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD MEAN TO LIVE IN A FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT WAY, THAT IS TO SAY TO ENTERTAIN A NOTION OF CULTURE IN ITS FULLEST SENSE, RATHER THAN AS ONE OBJECT OF LEISURE ACTIVITY.

WITHOUT THIS ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPRECIATION OF CULTURE, WITHOUT A SENSE OF CULTURE RICHER AND DEEPER THAN AS SOMETHING SELF-CONSCIOUSLY BUT PASSIVELY CONSUMED ON SPECIFIED OCCASIONS, THE KINDS OF SKILLS REQUIRED TO MANAGE AND MARKET OUTSIDE THE U.S. WILL REMAIN ELUSIVE.

I HAD HOPED TO GET THROUGH MY COMMENTS TODAY WITHOUT ONCE MENTIONING JAPAN. NO SUCH LUCK, FOR I RECENTLY CAME ACROSS A QUOTE FROM AN AMERICAN STUDENT OF JAPANESE EDUCATION WHICH I CANNOT RESIST, FOR IT SHOWS HOW DIFFERENTLY THE JAPANESE SEE CULTURE, COMMERCE, AND COMPETITIVENESS: [MERRY WHITE, THE JAPANESE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE, FREE PRESS, 1987]

> THE JAPANESE HAVE ANOTHER ADVANTAGE, WHICH THEY HAVE USED WELL IN PAST BORROWINGS FROM THE WEST. THEY ARE ALERT TO THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THEIR OWN CULTURAL VALUES AND PRACTICES AT THE CORE OF ANY NEW SYSTEM ADOPTED. THEY REGARD CULTURE AS AN INTEGRAL, DYNAMIC PART OF THEIR SOCIETY AND ECONOMY. FOR AMERICANS BRED ON ADAM SMITH AND THOMAS JEFFERSON, CULTURE IS WHAT'S LEFT ONLY AFTER THE MARKET ECONOMY AND ATTENDANT SOCIAL MOBILITY HAVE WORKED THEIR WILL.

CONCLUSION

LET ME TRY TO DRAW SOME CONCLUSIONS THAT THIS MIGHT SUGGEST FOR THE REINVENTION OF COMPETITION. FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND AREA STUDIES ARE HIGHLY DESIRABLE. EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THEIR TEACHING WOULD BE A GOOD THING, CERTAINLY FOR THOSE DOING THE TEACHING AND PROBABLY EVEN FOR THOSE DOING THE LEARNING. WE ALL HOPE SO, IN ANY EVENT.

ONE OUGHT TO TAKE SOME CARE, HOWEVER, NOT TO UNDERWHELM A FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM WITH INSTRUMENTAL SOLUTIONS. SLOGANEERING AND CURRICULUM REFORM ASIDE, ONE ESSENTIAL PREREQUISITE FOR THE EXERCISE OF CULTURAL SKILLS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ARENA MIGHT BE THE RECOGNITION OF THE FULL AMPLITUDE OF THE WORD "CULTURE", THE RECOGNITION THAT AMERICAN CULTURE OF THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY WAS NOT PREORDAINED BUT THE PRODUCT OF HISTORICAL CHOICE, AND THE RECOGNITION THAT OTHER SOCIETIES LIVE WITH OTHER CHOICES.

THE SECULARISM, MATERIALISM AND MORAL RELATIVISM OF NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY, HOWEVER REINFORCED BY POWERFUL AND INVASIVE MASS MEDIA, ARE EMPHATICALLY NOT THE FOUNDATIONS OF AN EMERGING GLOBAL CULTURE, BY THEIR PROXIMITY TO WHICH OTHER SOCIETIES OUGHT TO BE MEASURED.

IN THIS SENSE, THE DEPLOYMENT OF CULTURE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA IMPLIES MUCH MORE THAN A SOPHISTICATION OF THE OLD SAW ABOUT KNOWING YOUR MARKET OR OF THE EVEN OLDER SAW ABOUT KNOWING YOUR ADVERSARY.

IT IMPLIES THAT WE ARE ENTERING AN ERA OF INCREASED CONTACT AND COMPETITION, NOT ONLY BETWEEN ECONOMIES, BUT ALSO BETWEEN CULTURES, AN ERA WHICH WILL LEAVE NO SOCIETY, INCLUDING THE U.S., UNTOUCHED. THIS IN TURN EVOKES THE FULL DIMENSIONS OF THE WORD "EDUCATION" AND THE FULL OBLIGATION OF THE PROFESSION, "EDUCATOR". IT'S A BIG ORDER. BUT THEN, YOURS IS A BIG COUNTRY.

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